

MARCH 11, 2011 BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

**TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM R. BREETZ IN FAVOR OF
HB 5454 - THE UNIFORM MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS ACT ("UMOVA")**

Good Morning – my name is William R. Breetz. I am a Connecticut Commissioner to the Uniform Law Commission and a member of the Connecticut Law Revision Commission, having first been appointed to that body by Ella Grasso. I served as an active duty artillery officer in the United States Army from 1963-1965 and in the active reserve as the Executive Officer of an 8" howitzer battery from 1965 to 1967. Today, I teach full time at the University of Connecticut School of Law.

I am testifying today in favor of HB 5454, THE UNIFORM MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS ACT, which was introduced by Deputy Speaker Robert Godfrey.

Military personnel and overseas civilians face a variety of challenges to their participation as voters in U.S. elections, despite repeated congressional and state efforts to facilitate their ability to vote. Federal law and various state efforts –including existing law here in Connecticut - have not been wholly effective in overcoming difficulties that these voters face.

At its 2010 Annual Meeting, the national Uniform Law Commission promulgated the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA) to address these issues. UMOVA extends to state elections the assistance and protections for military and overseas voters currently found in federal law.

At Representative Godfrey's request, the Office of Legislative Research has prepared a very helpful comparison of existing state law and those changes to Connecticut law that this Act would impose. I will not take up your time by reviewing this excellent effort.

Finally, I have brought copies of a letter dated February 23, 2011 and signed by 29 national associations of military officers, non-commissioned officers, veterans, and other affiliated groups, supporting enactment of this legislation. That letter is attached as **Exhibit A** to this testimony.

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak in favor of this Act and would be happy to respond to your questions.



THE MILITARY COALITION

201 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-8113

February 23, 2011

Dear State Legislator:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent military and veteran organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, supports the Department of Defense (DoD) State Liaison Office's efforts in encouraging states to pass legislation to improve absentee voting for military members and their families.

The Military Coalition is pleased that your state is considering adopting the *Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act* (UMOVA) which was drafted in 2010 in response to significant obstacles that overseas military personnel and civilians face in exercising their right to vote. These obstacles include difficulty in registering from abroad, frequent address changes, slow mail delivery, inadequate time to return finished ballots once materials are received, ballots and ballot applications that never arrive, difficulty in obtaining information about candidates or issues, the inability to comply with notarization or verification procedures, or the voter's failure to properly comply with non-essential requirements for absentee materials.

In 2009, the U.S. Congress passed the *Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act* amendments to the federal *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* (UOCAVA), as part of the *National Defense Authorization Act* (FY09 NDAA). Although the MOVE Act was an important step toward alleviating the difficulties faced by these voters, individual state attempts to comply have not been wholly effective in overcoming these difficulties, and the federal laws do not encompass state and local elections. Further, elections are conducted under procedures that vary between jurisdictions, and many are conducted independent of the federal elections to which UOCAVA and MOVE apply. Lack of uniformity, and lack of application to the federal statutes to state and local elections, complicates efforts to fully enfranchise these voters.

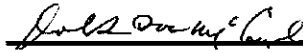
UMOVA will significantly assist states in meeting the statutory mandates of the recently enacted MOVE Act amendments, and expands upon those important protections and benefits for covered voters and elections at all levels. The act provides a common sense, state law solution to military and overseas voting obstacles, and strengthens efforts to comply with recently imposed federal requirements.

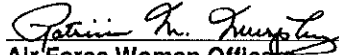
State support for service members and their families is crucial to the well-being of military families. By adopting this legislation, you are supporting both current and future military families within your state. Thank you for your support of our service members and their families.


Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(Signatures enclosed)



Air Force Association


Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)


Air Force Women Officers
Associated


AMVETS



Army Aviation Assn. of America



Assn. of Military Surgeons
of the United States


Assn. of the US Army


Association of the United States Navy



Commissioned Officers Assn. of
the US Public Health Service, Inc


CWO & WO Assn. US Coast Guard

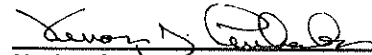

Fleet Reserve Assn.


Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.

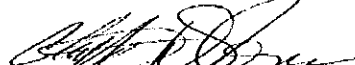

Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans
of America


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Marine Corps League


Marine Corps Reserve Association


Military Officers Assn. of America


Military Order of the Purple Heart


National Association for
Uniformed Services


National Guard Assn. of the US


National Military Family Assn.


Non Commissioned Officers Assn.
of the United States of America


Reserve Enlisted Assn. of the US


Reserve Officers Assn


Society of Medical Consultants
to the Armed Forces


The Retired Enlisted Assn.


USCG Chief Petty Officers Assn.


US Army Warrant Officers Assn.


Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US